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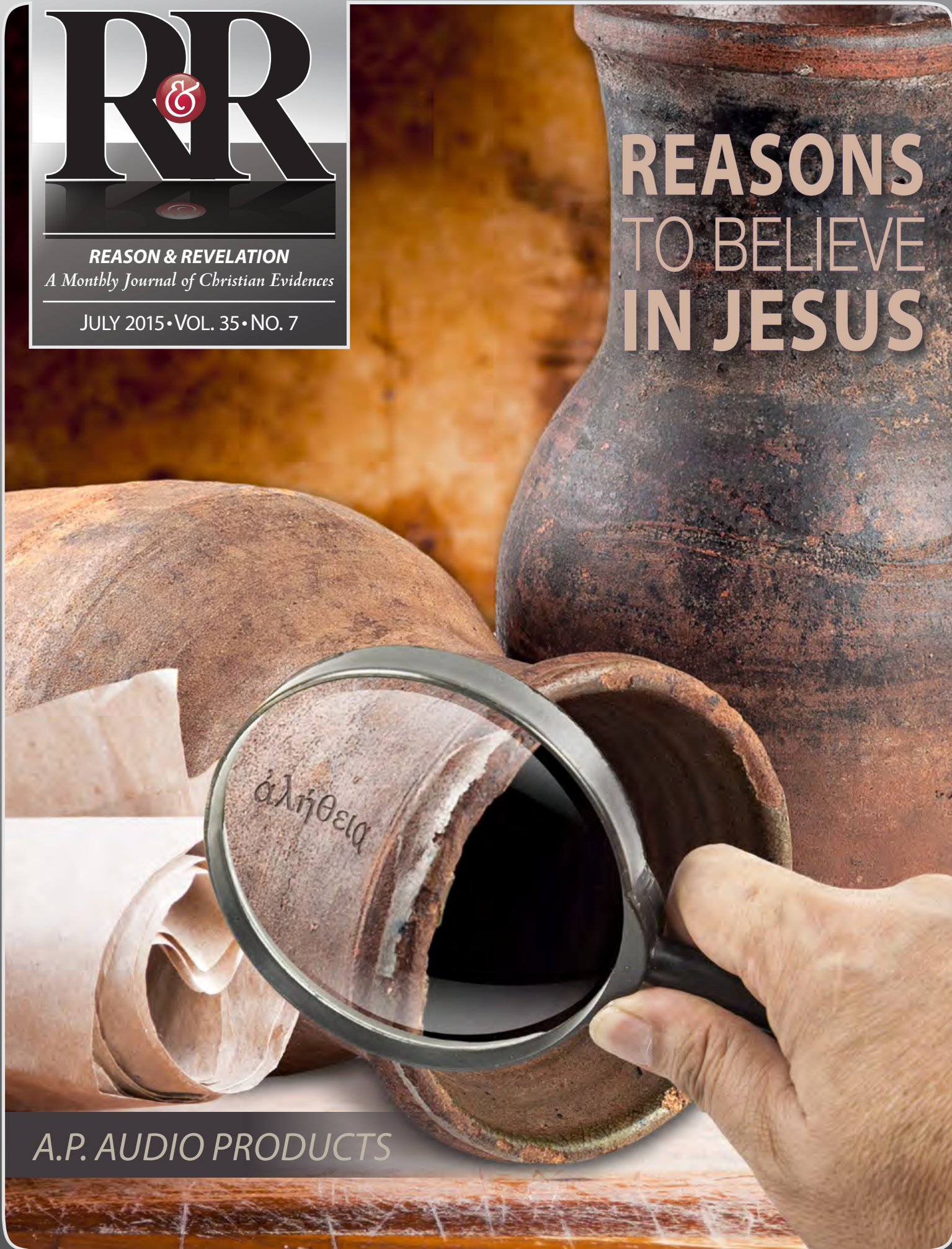


REASON & REVELATION

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REASONS TO BELIEVE IN JESUS



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Reasons to Believe in Jesus

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Article In Brief... 

If God exists and the Bible is His Word, then the evidence for Jesus being more than a mere man is conclusive. Fulfilling hundreds of ancient, inspired prophecies and working all manner of miracles, all the while claiming equality with God, makes Jesus different than any other person ever to walk the Earth. When we examine the evidence, like the apostle Thomas, we can come to the logical conclusion that Jesus is “Lord” and “God.”

WARS often come and go. Battles are won and lost. Businesses are bought and sold. Nations rise and fall. Scientific discoveries are made on a daily basis. These and other pertinent events influence human history in a myriad of interesting ways. But none of them is as influential as a powerful personality. Real history is written in names: Napoleon, Stalin, Hitler, Gandhi, Marx, Washington, Lincoln. After all, it is people who make wars, start businesses, forge new nations and cause their collapse. The events instigated by people are by-products of their personalities interacting with their surroundings, other people, and their ideas. In all of human history, one name, one Man, has risen to the top of every list of influential personalities—Jesus Christ.

Because of His influence, the life and teachings of Jesus have been more closely scrutinized than any life in human history. This scrutiny has resulted in a number of different reactions. Some have concluded that Jesus was a liar who deceived countless thousands of people in the time in which He lived, and billions since. Some have approached a study of His life with an attitude of skepticism, only to arrive on the other side of their spiritual and intellectual journey as firm believers in the deity of Christ. A number of people have chosen the middle ground, in which they acknowledge that Jesus was an amazing teacher and a good man, but they deny that He was the Son of God.

Though Jesus has been the most analyzed Person ever to walk the

Earth, still the most common response to the life of Jesus is simply apathy. It seems the majority of the billions of people who have lived since the early first century have approached the Person of Jesus neither intently nor earnestly. They have given little attention to the details of His life. Sadly, if most people who have lived since the death of Jesus Christ were asked what they thought about Him, they would have to respond, “I don’t know. I’ve never really given Him much thought.”

What about you? Have you given the Person of Jesus serious thought? If not, we humbly ask you to look carefully at the evidence for Jesus’ divine nature. If you are a follower of Jesus and call yourself a Christian, do you know why? What do you say to others when they ask you why you call yourself after Jesus Christ and live according to His will? What proof can you offer that demonstrates Jesus was God incarnate?

TWO PRIMARY REASONS FOR UNBELIEF IN JESUS

PEOPLE have rejected Jesus as the Heaven-sent, virgin-born, prophesied Messiah ever since He walked the Earth. Recall, for example, at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry how He entered the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth and read publicly from the Old Testament book of Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon **Me**, because He has anointed **Me** to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent **Me** to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19, emp. added).

Following this reading, Jesus closed the book, sat down, and “began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (4:21). Though the Jews initially marveled and questioned how the promised Messiah could actually be the son of a carpenter in Nazareth, upon further hearing, they “rose up and thrust Him out of the city...that they might throw Him down over the cliff” (4:28). This encounter was only the beginning of instances in which countless individuals rejected Jesus. Though some would come to believe in Him, most did not.

The majority of people in the world today reject Jesus as Lord and God for two primary reasons. First, millions refuse to accept Jesus as God-incarnate because they reject the notion of God altogether. If God does not exist then Jesus never existed as “the Word...God” Who stepped out of eternity and “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:1,14). It makes no sense to contend that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the **living God**” (Matthew 16:16, emp. added), if God is dead. If a supernatural, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, living spirit Being is merely a figment of the imagination of man, the first-century Jesus of Nazareth was delusional at best and a liar at worst. In considering this fundamental reason for the rejection of Jesus, Christians must prepare themselves to defend the primary proposition that “We believe Jesus is God-Incarnate, which is possible **because we know God exists.**” We are not suggesting using circular reasoning to defend the deity of Christ; rather we are acknowledging the basic fact that Christ could not be God, if God does not exist. Therefore, a

person can ultimately come to the conclusion that Jesus is “my Lord and my God” (John 20:28) **only** if he first knows that God, indeed, exists. [NOTE: See our article titled “7 Reasons to Believe in God” (2014) for a discussion of why mankind can (and should) come to the logical conclusion that God exists. See also the “Existence of God” category at apologeticspress.org.]

Second, it would be futile to defend the supernatural nature of Jesus as depicted in the Bible without first recognizing the fact that many reject the Bible altogether as a supernatural revelation from God to man. Billions of non-Christians around the world may believe in some sort of god, but they still discount the Bible as being inspired by the Creator. Most unbelievers admit that Jesus of Nazareth lived, but they reject Jesus, the Christ, as He is revealed in both the Old and New Testaments. The fact is, however, if an all-knowing, all-powerful God exists (and there is ample proof that He does; cf. Romans 1:20), then such a God could easily inspire a book

that would help mankind come to know “that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (John 20:31), “the Savior of the world” (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14). So what is the proof that the Bible is of supernatural origin? Why should an honest truth-seeker come to the conclusion that the Bible is the special revelation from the God of the Universe? In short, the main, overarching reason that the Bible can be demonstrated to be of divine origin is because the Bible writers were correct in everything they wrote—about the past, the present, and even the future—which is **humanly** impossible. [For more information on the inspiration of the Bible, see our article titled “3 Good Reasons to Believe the Bible is from God” (2015). See also the “Inspiration of the Bible” category at apologeticspress.org.]

The two primary reasons for the rejection of Jesus as the Son of God are thus shown to be false. By taking these criticisms and turning them on their heads, they actually provide the first two foundational

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pillars for belief in Christ—(1) God exists and (2) the Bible is His Word. The next sensible question to ask is, “What evidence does the Bible give for the deity of Jesus?”

JESUS FULFILLED THE OLD TESTAMENT MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

WHILE it is true that most people’s lives can only be chronicled after they have lived them, the life of Jesus was miraculously chronicled (by divine inspiration) long before He arrived on Earth. Such Messianic prophecies are proof of both the divine inspiration of the Bible as well as the divine nature of Jesus. The reason that Jesus, the apostles, and the New Testament prophets spent so much of their time teaching and preaching from the Old Testament Messianic prophecies is because **Jesus was proven to be the Christ by His fulfillment of these prophecies** (cf. Luke 24:25-26,44; Acts 8:30-39).

Jesus fulfilled in minute detail over 300 prophecies that relate to the coming of the Messiah. Space prohibits a listing of all of these prophecies, but a representative sampling is appropriate. The Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem in Judea (Micah 5:2) of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; cf. Genesis 3:15—“her Seed”). He would be a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah (Genesis 22:18; 26:4; 49:10; Numbers 24:17). He was to be a regal monarch (Psalm 89:3-4; Isaiah 9:6-7; Psalm 110:1) and at the same time a suffering servant (Isaiah 53). He was to be betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9) for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:13). The Lord’s Ruler would come into Jerusalem riding on the foal of a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). He would be buried with the

rich (Isaiah 53:9). During His suffering, His clothes would be distributed to those who cast lots for them (Psalm 22:18). His attackers would pierce Him (Zechariah 12:10). Even though His physical suffering would be severe, His bones would not be broken (Psalm 34:20). And in spite of His death, His physical body would not experience decay (Psalm 16:10). This small sampling of precise prophetic details is only a fraction of the many Old Testament prophecies that exist. The prophecies were specifically designed to be an efficient mechanism by which the Jewish community could recognize the Messiah when He arrived.

When all of the pieces of the Messianic puzzle are put together, one individual stands out as the only person who fulfilled every single prophecy in minute detail—Jesus Christ. The life and activities of Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament documents brilliantly blend the theme of a regal monarch and a suffering servant into one magnificent portrait of the triumphant Jesus Who was the sacrificial Lamb at His death on the cross, and Who became the triumphant Lion of Judah in His resurrection from the grave. The lineage of Jesus Christ is meticulously traced in order to show that He qualified as the Seed of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Judah, and of David (Matthew 1; Luke 3:23-38). The narrative detailing His birth verifies that He was indeed born in Bethlehem of Judea, from which city the Messiah would arise (Luke 2:1-7). The birth narrative also intricately portrays the pre-existence of Jesus before time began, fulfilling the prophecy that the Messiah existed before King David (Matthew

1:18-25; cf. 22:41-46; John 1:1-5,14). Furthermore, Jesus did, in fact, enter Jerusalem riding on the foal of a donkey (Matthew 21:1-11).

The New Testament narratives depicting the death of Jesus Christ verify that Jesus was betrayed by His friend and sold for exactly 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14-16). At His death His bones were not broken, soldiers cast lots for His garments, and His side was pierced with a spear (John 19:33-37; Matthew 27:35). During His suffering, He was numbered with the transgressors as Isaiah 53 predicted by being crucified between two thieves, and at His death He was buried in the tomb of a wealthy man as was also foretold (Matthew 27:57). This type of verification could continue for many pages. The life of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, as depicted in the New Testament documents, was designed to fulfill the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.

Due to this overwhelming congruence of the life of Jesus Christ with the predictive Messianic prophecy of the Old Testament, some have suggested that Jesus was an imposter who was able, by masterful manipulation, to so artificially organize His life as to make it look like He was the Messiah. Such a contention cannot be reasonably maintained in light of the fact that many of the prophecies were far beyond His control. Obviously, it would be impossible for a person to arrange who his ancestors were or where he would be born. Furthermore, it would be near impossible to coordinate events so that He could make sure that He was crucified among thieves, while also buried in the tomb of a rich man. How could the betrayal price

of Judas be manipulated by Jesus? And how, pray tell, would Jesus have managed to arrange it so that soldiers cast lots for His clothing? The idea that Jesus manipulated all of these events to make it appear as if He was the Messiah not only is indefensible, but it also speaks to the fact that Jesus obviously was the fulfillment of the Old Testament, Messianic prophecies.

Others have objected to Jesus as the Messiah based on the idea that the New Testament documents are not reliable, and were artificially concocted to describe things that Jesus never really did. This objection also falls flat in light of the actual evidence. It cannot be denied that the New Testament has proven itself to be the most reliable book in ancient history (along with the books of the Old Testament). When it records people, places, and events that are checkable using archaeological means, those people, places, and events invariably prove to be factual and historic. Again, the abundant evidence verifies that the New Testament is accurate and factual. Many of the Messianic prophecies documented in the New Testament do not describe anything inherently miraculous. There was nothing miraculous about Jesus being buried in a rich man's tomb. Nor was there anything miraculous about Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey, or being betrayed by His friend for 30 pieces of silver. These events are, if not ordinary, at least very plausible, everyday events that theoretically could have happened to anybody. And yet, due to the fact that such everyday events had been predicted about the Messiah **hundreds of years before the arrival of Jesus**, the fulfillment of the events

becomes one of the most amazing miracles recorded in the Bible. It is no wonder that Jesus, the apostles, and the early church used fulfilled Messianic prophecy as one of their foundational pillars of proof for the deity of Christ.

JESUS WORKED MIRACLES

IN view of the fact that miracles have served as a confirmation of God's revelation since time began (Exodus 4:1-9; 1 Kings 18:36-39; Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4), it should be no surprise that "when the fullness of time had come" (Galatians 4:4), and the promised Messiah, the Son of God, came to Earth for the purpose of saving the world from sin (Luke 19:10), that He would confirm His identity and message by performing miracles. Centuries before the birth of Christ, the prophet Isaiah foretold of a time when "the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.... [T]he lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing" (35:5-6). Although this language has a figurative element to it, it literally is true of the coming of the Messiah. When John the Baptizer heard about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples to Jesus asking if He was "the Coming One" of Whom the prophets spoke. Jesus responded to John's disciples by pointing to the people whom He had miraculously healed (thus fulfilling Isaiah's Messianic prophecy), saying, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: the blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matthew 11:4-5; cf. Mark 7:37). Jesus wanted them to know that He

was doing exactly what "the Coming One" was supposed to do (cf. Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 8:17), and what the Jews expected Him to do—perform miracles (John 7:31; cf. John 4:48; 1 Corinthians 1:22).

In a sense, Jesus' miracles served a different purpose than those wrought by Moses, Elijah, or one of the New Testament apostles or prophets. Unlike all other miracle workers recorded in Scripture, Jesus actually claimed to be the prophesied Messiah, the Son of God, and His miracles were performed to prove both the truthfulness of His message **and** His divine nature. Whereas the apostles and prophets of the New Testament worked miracles to confirm their message that **Jesus** was the Son of God, Jesus performed miracles to bear witness that **He** was, in fact, the Son of God. In response to a group of Jews who inquired about whether or not He was the Christ, Jesus replied,

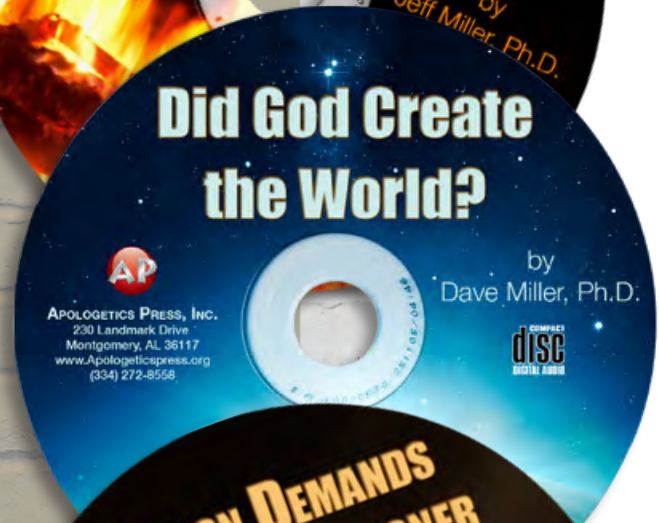
I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me.... I and My Father are one.... If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him (John 10:25,30,37-38).

Similarly, on another occasion Jesus defended His deity, saying, "[T]he works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me" (John 5:36). While on Earth, Jesus was "attested by God...with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him" (Acts 2:22, NASB). And, according to the apostle John,

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“Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but **these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31, emp. added). As would be expected from the One Who claimed to be God incarnate (cf. John 1:1-3,14; 10:30), Scripture records that Jesus performed miracles throughout His ministry in an effort to provide sufficient proof of His divine message and nature.

Jesus' Signs Were Many and Varied

Mankind is expected to believe that Jesus is the Son of God not because He performed **one or two** marvelous deeds during His lifetime. To the contrary, the Gospel accounts are saturated with a variety of miracles that Christ performed, not for wealth or political power, but that the world may be convinced that He was sent by the Father to bring salvation to mankind. As Isaiah prophesied, Jesus performed **miracles of healing** (Matthew 8:16-17). He cleansed a leper with the touch of His hand (Matthew 8:1-4) and healed all manner of sickness and disease with the word of His mouth (cf. John 4:46-54). One woman who had a hemorrhage for 12 years was healed immediately simply by touching the fringe of His garment (Luke 8:43-48). Similarly, on one occasion after Jesus came into the land of Gennesaret, **all** who were sick in **all** of the surrounding region came to Him, “and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched it were made perfectly well” (Matthew 14:34-36; Mark 3:10). Generally speaking, “**great multitudes** came to Him, having

with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus’ feet, and He healed them” (Matthew 15:30, emp. added). “He cured **many** of infirmities, afflictions...and to **many** blind He gave sight” (Luke 7:21, emp. added). Even Jesus’ enemies confessed to His “many signs” (John 11:48).

Jesus not only exhibited power over the sick and afflicted, He also showed His **superiority over nature** more than once. Whereas God’s prophet Moses turned water into blood by striking water with his rod (Exodus 7:20), Jesus simply willed water into wine/grape juice (*oinos*) at a wedding feast (John 2:1-11). He further exercised His power over the natural world by calming the Sea of Galilee during a turbulent storm (Matthew 8:23-27), by walking on water for a considerable distance to reach His disciples (Matthew 14:25-43), and by causing a fig tree to wither away at His command. Jesus’ supernatural superiority over the physical world (which He created—Colossians 1:16) is exactly what we would expect from One Who claimed to be the Son of God.

Jesus performed miracles that demonstrated His **power even over death**. Recall that when John the Baptizer’s disciples came to Jesus inquiring about His identity, Jesus instructed them to tell John that “the dead are raised” (Matthew 11:5). The widow of Nain’s son had already been declared dead and placed in a casket when Jesus touched the open coffin and told him to “arise.” Immediately, “he who was dead sat up and began to speak” (Luke 7:14-15). Lazarus had already been dead and buried for four days by the time Jesus raised him from the dead (John

11:1-44). Such a great demonstration of power over death caused “many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did” to believe in Him (John 11:45).

Jesus Rose from the Dead!

Jesus’ own resurrection from the dead was the climax of all of His miracles, and serves as perhaps the most convincing miracle of all. Indeed, Jesus was “declared to be **the Son of God** with power...**by the resurrection from the dead**” (Romans 1:4, emp. added). The New Testament book of Acts stresses the fact of Jesus’ resurrection almost to the point of redundancy. Acts 1:22, as one example, finds Peter and the other apostles choosing an apostle who was to “become a witness” of the resurrection of Christ. Then, on the Day of Pentecost, Peter insisted in his sermon to the multitude that had assembled to hear him that “God raised up” Jesus and thus loosed Him from the pangs of death (Acts 2:24). And to make sure that his audience understood that it was a physical resurrection, Peter stated specifically that Jesus’ “flesh did not see corruption” (Acts 2:31). His point was clear: Jesus had been physically raised from the dead and the apostles had witnessed the resurrected Christ. [Other passages in Acts which document that the central theme of the apostles’ preaching was the bodily resurrection of Christ include Acts 3:15; 3:26; 4:2,10,33; 5:30; 10:40-43; 13:30-37; 17:3,31-32.] Furthermore, the entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 15 (especially verse 14) verifies that the preaching of the apostle Paul centered on the resurrection of Christ.

Jesus Worked Wonders that are Not Being Duplicated Today

What's more, neither the modern alleged "faith healer" nor the 21st-century scientist is duplicating the miracles that Jesus worked while on Earth 2,000 years ago. Pseudo-wonder workers today stage seemingly endless events where willing participants with supposed sicknesses appear and act as if they are being healed of their diseases by the laying on of hands. Nebulous aches and pains and dubious illnesses that defy medical substantiation are supposedly cured by prominent "faith healers" who simultaneously are building financial empires with the funds they receive from gullible followers. Oral Roberts, Benny Hinn, and a host of others have made many millions of dollars off of viewers who naively send them money without stopping to consider the real differences between the miracles that Jesus worked and what they observe these men do today.

Jesus went about "healing every sickness and every disease" (Matthew 9:35). His miraculous wonders knew no limitations. He could cure anything. Luke, the learned physician (Colossians 4:14), recorded how He could restore a shriveled hand in the midst of His enemies (Luke 6:6-10) and heal a severed ear with the touch of His hand (Luke 22:51). He healed "many" of their blindness (Luke 7:21), including one man who had been born blind (John 9:1-7). He even raised the dead simply by calling out to them (John 11:43). What modern-day "spiritualist," magician, or scientist has come close to doing these sorts of things that defy natural explanations? Who is going into schools for the blind and giving children their sight? Who is going

to funerals or graveyards to raise the dead? These are the kinds of miracles that Jesus worked—supernatural feats that testify to His identity as the Heaven-sent Savior of the world.

OTHER PROOFS OF JESUS' DEITY

Jesus Never Sinned

WHEN God instructed the Israelites to sacrifice the Passover Lamb, He explained that the animal must be without spot or blemish. The lamb could not be lame, have a disease, or be too old. Only a "perfect" sacrifice would be acceptable. As our Passover Lamb, Jesus provided the perfect sacrifice (1 Corinthians 5:7). His perfection was not outward in His flesh, but was the inward perfection of a sinless life. Peter, one of Jesus' closest followers, wrote that Christians have not been redeemed "with corruptible things, like silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19). The Hebrews writer

explains that Jesus was tempted in every point just as we are, yet Jesus remained "without sin" (4:15).

Though many of Jesus' enemies who attacked Him while He was on Earth, and many who attack Him still today, have accused Jesus of sinning, they have failed miserably to give a single instance of wrong doing. Jesus' bold and unanswered challenge continues to ring across the centuries: "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" (John 8:46). The answer to that question for almost 2,000 years has been a resounding, "No one." Every honest-hearted person who looks at the personality of Jesus, and compares it to his or her own, must admit that the Christ possesses a confidence in His own sinlessness that is beyond that of any mere human. While it may be true that cult leaders or other arrogant humans claim to be sinless, having never made a moral misstep, it is rather easy to show actions in their lives that prove them to be wrong. In fact, is it not the moral leaders who

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admit their own weaknesses who are the most admired? Yet, Jesus could not admit any moral failings, because He had none. He explained to His enemies, “Yet you have not known Him [God], but I know Him. And if I say ‘I do not know Him,’ I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him **and keep His word**” (John 8:55). Jesus’ moral perfection speaks volumes about His divinity.

Jesus Forgave Sins

Suppose a man who murdered his neighbor had lived a guilt-ridden life for years. Finally, he decided to tell one of his friends what he had done so many years before. The friend listened carefully and said, “You are a murderer, but I forgive you, don’t worry any more about it.” What good would it do for the man’s friend to forgive him? For a person who was unrelated to the crime, and has no official authority to forgive the crime, means nothing. We understand that forgiveness can only be offered by a person who has been wronged, or who has the official authority to forgive others. That is why the fact that Jesus presumed to forgive sins is so amazing.

In Mark 2, we find the story of a paralyzed man who was lowered into a room in front of Jesus. Jesus looked at the man and said, “Son, your sins are forgiven you” (Mark 2:5). Many of those within earshot of Jesus’ statement were appalled at His pronouncement. They demanded (by way of rhetorical question): “Who can forgive sins but **God alone?**” (Mark 2:7, emp. added). And they were right: no one but God can forgive sins, which was Jesus’ point. If He had the power to cause the paralyzed man to walk, He also had

the power to forgive his sins. And if He had the power to forgive his sins, and no one can forgive sins but God, then Jesus must be God. The fact that Jesus demanded (and demonstrated) that He had the power personally to forgive any person of all sins, sets Him apart from any other character in human history.

Jesus Accepted Worship

The Bible reveals time and again that God alone is to be worshiped (Exodus 20:3-5; 2 Kings 17:34-36; Acts 14:8-18). The Bible also reveals that man must refrain from worshipping angels. When the apostle John fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who had revealed to him the message of Revelation, the angel responded, saying, “See that you **do not do that**. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. **Worship God**” (Revelation 22:9, emp. added; cf. Revelation 19:10). Angels, idols, and humans are all unworthy of the reverent worship that is due only to God. As Jesus reminded Satan: “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him **only** you shall serve’” (Matthew 4:10, emp. added).

Unlike good men and good angels who have always rejected worship from humanity, Jesus accepted worship. If worship is to be reserved only for God, and Jesus, the One “who knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21), accepted worship, then the logical conclusion is that Jesus believed that He was Deity. Numerous times the Bible mentions that Jesus accepted worship from mankind. Matthew 14:33 indicates that those who saw Jesus walk on water “worshiped Him.” John 9:38 reveals that the

blind man whom Jesus had healed, later confessed his belief in Jesus as the Son of God and “worshiped him.” After Mary Magdalene and the other women visited the empty tomb of Jesus, and the risen Christ appeared to them, “they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him” (Matthew 28:9). When Thomas first witnessed the resurrected Christ, he exclaimed, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). Later, when Jesus appeared to the apostles in Galilee, “they worshiped Him” on a mountain (Matthew 28:17). A few days after that, his disciples “worshiped Him” in Bethany (Luke 24:52). Time and again Jesus accepted the kind of praise from men that is due only to God. He never sought to correct His followers and redirect the worship away from Himself, as did the angel in Revelation or the apostle Paul in Acts 14. Nor did God strike Jesus with deadly worms for not redirecting the praise He received from men as He did Herod, who, when being hailed as a god, “did not give praise to God” (Acts 12:23).

Jesus once stated during His earthly ministry, “[A]ll should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him” (John 5:23; cf. 5:18; 10:19-39). While on Earth, Jesus was honored on several occasions. His followers **worshiped** Him. They even worshiped Him after His ascension into heaven (Luke 24:52). Unlike good men and angels in Bible times who rejected worship, Jesus unhesitatingly received glory, honor, and praise from His creation. Truly, such worship is one of the powerful proofs of Jesus’ deity (cf. Revelation 5).

DID JESUS DENY HE WAS GOD?

In spite of all the evidence presented thus far, some have suggested that Jesus did not claim to be divine. They contend that He simply believed He was a prophet, but not the Messiah who was the Mighty God (Isaiah 9:6). They rest their case on passages that, simply put, they have misinterpreted. Briefly notice the following two examples.

On one occasion, a wealthy young man ran to see Jesus and asked Him, “Good teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” Jesus responded by saying, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but One, that is, God” (Mark 10:17). According to the skeptical view, Jesus is denying that He is God. But a closer look at Jesus’ comment reveals just the opposite to be the case. Notice that Jesus never denies that He is the “good teacher.” He simply makes the comment that there is only one Who is truly good, and that is God. Thus, if the young man’s statement is true that Jesus is the “good teacher,” and there is only one Who is “good” and that is God, then Jesus must be God.

On another occasion, Jesus prayed to the Father: “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). Supposedly, by calling the Father, “the only true God,” Jesus excluded Himself from being Deity. There are at least two main problems with this interpretation of Jesus’ statement. First, it would contradict numerous other passages in the Gospel of John. In fact, the primary point of the book is to testify to Jesus’ deity. Second, the verse can be better understood in light of the fact that Jesus was not contrasting Himself with the Father; He was

contrasting the many false, pagan gods with Jehovah, the only true God. Furthermore, if Jesus’ reference to the Father being “the only true God” somehow excludes Jesus from being Deity, then (to be consistent) Jesus also must be disqualified from being man’s Savior. Jehovah said: “Besides me there is no savior” (Isaiah 43:11; cf. Hosea 13:4; Jude 25). Yet, Paul and Peter referred to Jesus as our “Savior” several times in their inspired writings (Ephesians 5:23; Philippians 3:20; 2 Timothy 1:10; 2 Peter 1:1,11; 2:20; etc.). Also, if Jesus is excluded from Godhood (based on a misinterpretation of John 17:3), then, pray tell, must God the Father be excluded from being man’s Lord? To the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote that there is “one Lord” (4:4), and, according to Jude 4 “our only Owner and Lord” is “Jesus Christ.” Yet, in addition to Jesus being called Lord throughout the New Testament, so is God the Father (Matthew 11:25; Luke 1:32; Acts 1:25) and the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17). Obviously, when the Bible reveals that there is only one God, one Savior, one Lord, one Creator (Isaiah 44:24; John 1:3), etc., reason and revelation demand that we understand the inspired writers to be excluding everyone and everything—other than the members of the Godhead.

CONCLUSION

ALMOST 2,000 years ago, a zealous Jew by the name of Saul fought against Christianity with all his might. He believed Jesus Christ to be a fraud and His followers to be deluded. He chased them from city to city, imprisoning them, and participating in their deaths. Then Saul saw “the light.” Jesus appeared

to Him and Saul realized the horrible mistake He had made. Saul’s honest heart was so impressed by the evidence available to him that he converted to Christianity and became a powerful force in spreading the Gospel.

And so today, those who come to the person of Jesus Christ with open and honest hearts find powerful evidence to believe He is God. He fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies regarding the Messiah. He performed many different kinds of miracles to validate His message. He predicted His own death and resurrection. He accepted worship. He lived a morally perfect, sinless life. And he boldly demanded that He had the power on Earth to forgive sins. When a person follows all of this evidence to its correct conclusion, he or she will bow before Jesus the Christ and proclaim, just as the apostle Thomas did, “My Lord and My God” (John 20:28).

[NOTE: For more information about the nature of Christ, see our book *Behold! The Lamb of God* or visit the “Deity of Christ” section of our Web site www.apologeticsspress.org. Also, to learn what the Bible teaches regarding how to receive the free, gracious gift of salvation that Jesus made possible, see our free e-book *Receiving the Gift of Salvation* at apologeticsspress.org/PDF-books.aspx.]

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NOTE FROM *The Editor*



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